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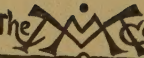
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THE BLESSED TRINITY

•The  Co. •

THE BLESSED TRINITY

By the Most Reverend

RICHARD DOWNEY, Ph.D., D.D.

ARCHBISHOP OF LIVERPOOL

Introduction by

NEIL McNEIL

Archbishop of Toronto

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INTRODUCTION

MANY wonder at the saying of St John the Apostle that God is charity. This is naturally expected in the case of those who think of charity as nothing more than almsgiving; but not a few of those who have a true conception of charity as the love of God prompting love of fellow men see no definite meaning in St John's statement. A careful perusal of this book by the Archbishop of Liverpool will greatly assist the reader to glimpse the profound truth of the Apostolic teaching.

One who believes in God, but rejects the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, must admit that mutual love is higher in the scale of values than self-love. "Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friends." If there were only one Person in God, mutual love would have been impossible to Him, until the creation of the Angels. He would have been capable only of self-love. The perfection of love would not have been His, and He would have depended on creatures for perfect happiness. He would not have been in Himself infinitely per-

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fect. This contradiction disappears in presence of the Christian knowledge that in God there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Their mutual, infinite, eternal love is Their life and Their sanctity.

When we speak of charity as the love of God, we usually think of the love we owe Him; but it also means the love *in* Him. Similarly, the expression, "the knowledge of a man," may mean either the knowledge that others have of him or the knowledge he possesses in himself. When St John says that God is charity, he means the mutual, infinite, eternal love of the three divine Persons in God.

As one of the foreshadowings of the Trinity in the Old Testament, the Archbishop of Liverpool points to the expression in Genesis: "Let us make men to our own image and likeness." This implies that man is made to live in society with the capacity and the duty of mutual love. As St Thomas says, God made man in the image of the Trinity. Hence the many fellowships and loyalties which make for man's happiness in family, nation, and other associations, which are the product of man's natural philanthropy. But Baptism initiates us into a supernatural brotherhood, the Catholic Church, and endows us with a trinity of virtues, faith, hope, and charity. This is the most perfect image of the Trinity

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which man is capable of receiving. It comes to us through God the Son made man, our Redeemer. St Paul tells us that, of the three virtues named above, charity is the greatest. It is the one which will continue and expand in the beatitude of the Blessed Trinity. In this life it is the virtue which sanctifies our relations with others in all forms of association. Charity is the love of God prompting love of our fellow men.

NEIL MCNEIL,
Archbishop of Toronto.

THE BLESSED TRINITY

CHAPTER I

THE DOGMA OF THE TRINITY

1. *General Notions*

By the Blessed Trinity we mean the mystery of one God in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each subsisting distinct in the same identical divine nature.

It will be well if, at the outset of our study of this fundamental dogma of the Christian religion, we acquire precise and clear-cut ideas as to the exact significance of such terms as nature and person, since they must needs occur frequently in any treatise on the Trinity.

They are words which we employ commonly enough in ordinary conversation, and in writing in a loose literary way, without adverting to their more precise philosophical and theological connotations. Both words are of ancient lineage and have played no mean part in the

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history of dogma. For centuries they were the shibboleths, the watchwords, the touchstones of orthodoxy, during the great controversies which distracted the early Church as to the divinity and humanity of Christ. In the welter of theological argument, ambiguities were gradually removed, and in course of time the meaning of these two words gradually crystallized into definite technical form.

The word *nature*, derived from the Latin *natum*,¹ means literally that which is born, or that which is produced. We use the term *nature*, in its widest sense, to indicate everything that has been produced, the totality of finite things, the whole created universe which in its various parts furnishes the objects of what are called the natural sciences. These objects, the earth, the sea, the animals, the stars, differ very considerably: each, we say, has its own nature. And so by an easy transition from its etymological significance, we arrive at the philosophical meaning of the term *nature* as that which makes a thing what it is; in other words, the essence, or quiddity of the thing.

"Nature, properly so called," says Aristotle, "is the essence of beings, which have in themselves and by themselves the principle of their movement."² The nature of any being, then,

¹ *Nasci*, to be born.

² *Met.* lib. v, c. 4.

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is simply its essence considered from the dynamic standpoint, that is, precisely as the principle of its peculiar activities. It is the nature of a fish to swim, of a bird to fly, of a reptile to crawl; and it is by observing their characteristic operations, their native activities, that we are able to classify things according to their natures.

The word person is derived from the Latin *persona*, which originally meant the mask worn by ancient Greek and Roman actors on the stage. These tragic and comic masks were so constructed as to magnify the voice which sounded through (*per sonare*) the spacious cavity in front of the actor's mouth. That through which the voice sounded, the mask, was naturally called *persona*.

The term was then transferred from the mask to the actor who wore it as he portrayed some god or other mighty potentate. Next, it came to be applied to any assumed character of distinction, and finally to any human being as a name of dignity. For, it will be noted, person is primarily a name of honour, indicating rank and importance; and consequently, in philosophical usage, it came to be applied exclusively to the highest grade of the things which exist in Nature namely, substances endowed with rationality. Accordingly, in the fifth century, Boethius defined *persona* as "*rationalis naturæ*

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individua substantia," i.e. "an individual substance of a rational nature." St Thomas Aquinas, Leibnitz, Kant, and others have made valuable contributions to the study of personality, but the classical definition of Boethius remains substantially unchanged and unchallenged.

Hence the requisite qualifications for personality are:

1. In the first place, *subsistence* or substantiality; a person is first and foremost a substance, that is, something which exists in itself, something which subsists, as for instance an apple, and not something which merely inheres in something else, like the colour of the apple.

2. In the second place, the substance must be *distinct*, that is, it must have complete individuality, so that it is not in any sense part of, or common to, something else. Consequently neither the human body nor the human soul, separately, is a person.

3. And, finally, this distinct substance must be of a *rational nature*. We cannot, therefore, predicate personality of dogs or horses, however clever they may be, and still less can we predicate it of lower forms of life, or of inanimate objects. By a person, then, we mean a distinct substance endowed with the faculty of reason.

We speak of the *mystery* of the Blessed Trin-

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ity, because clearly we are stating a truth which is above or beyond reason, when we say that in the same divine nature there are three distinct persons. As far as our experience goes, wherever we have a plurality of persons, we have also a plurality of individual natures. Apart from revelation we should never even have conceived the possibility of such a thing as absolute identity of nature in three distinct persons.

The Council of the Vatican has declared that the deposit of revealed truth contains some mysteries which can neither be understood nor demonstrated by reason, and in the whole ambit of divine revelation there is nothing more profound than the doctrine of the Trinity. Here, then, if anywhere, we have a truth above reason. It is beyond the wit of mortal man to fathom it, to sound its depths and shoals, for "no one knoweth the Son but the Father: neither doth anyone know the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him."¹ Nevertheless, with St Athanasius, St Augustine, and St Thomas Aquinas, we contend that the doctrine of the Trinity is not against reason, and, furthermore, that we can establish to the full the rationality of the obedience of the faith which accepts this great mystery.

¹Matt. xi, 27.

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To say that unaided human reason could never have excogitated the doctrine of the Trinity, is not to say that the doctrine is incomprehensible or evidently repugnant to reason. The fact being made known to us by revelation that there are three persons in one God, reason, as we shall see, is well able to dispose of the objections which reason can bring. Truth is not at war with itself, and consequently reason and revelation play perfectly harmonious parts in the service of Eternal Truth.

2. The Catholic Doctrine

From the very beginning the doctrine of the Trinity was in the forefront of Christian teaching. It is enshrined in the final commission of our Blessed Saviour to his Apostles: "going therefore teach all nations . . . baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost"¹; and, as we shall see, it is taught explicitly in many passages of the New Testament. In fact the germ of the Apostles' Creed would seem to be the statement of the doctrine of the Trinity set forth by St Irenaeus in the second century in the following formula: "I believe in one God the Father Almighty, who made the heaven, the earth and the sea, and all

¹ Matt. xxvii, 19.

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things contained therein; and in Jesus Christ the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets preached the dispositions of God.”¹

Now the preaching of this new doctrine, affecting as it did the vital concept of God, not unnaturally led to considerable confusion of thought amongst some of the early converts to Christianity, who brought with them into the Church preconceived notions with regard to the Deity.

No less than three distinct influences are discernible, distorting the doctrine of the Trinity, each in a different way. First of all, there was the Jewish influence, stressing monotheism as opposed to the polytheism of the pagans; then there were the Platonists with their ingrained tendency to multiply divinities; and, finally, rationalism was represented by the Gnostics whose general preoccupation was to harmonize the Christian religion with current philosophical speculation.

1. The Jewish influence made itself felt in the heresy of the Sabellians who, through over-emphasizing the unity of the Godhead against the Platonists, ended by making the three divine persons mere modes or manifestations of the divinity. They seem to have taken the word per-

¹ *Contra Haereses* I, c. 10, 1.

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son in its original sense of mask or character, and to have conceived the Trinity as an outward manifestation of the threefold character of God as creator, as redeemer, and as sanctifier. Obviously, here, there is merely a trinity of concepts and not of persons.

2. Many of the Platonists went to the other extreme, and multiplied not only the divine persons, but also the divine nature itself, so as to afford a real basis for the charge of polytheism levelled at them by the Sabellians.

3. The Gnostic influence favoured Arianism and other forms of Subordinationism, which made the second and third persons of the Trinity subordinate, or inferior, to the Father, and consequently in reality made the Son and the Holy Ghost emanations, as it were, outside the divine nature altogether, and therefore in essence creatures.

All these different forms of error were condemned in the celebrated dogmatic letter which Pope Dionysius (A.D. 259-269) addressed to Denis, Bishop of Alexandria. In this epistle are formulated the principles which later governed the decisions of the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) in defining the divinity of the Son, and the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381) in defining the divinity of the Holy Ghost.

The whole doctrine of the Trinity is sum-

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marized in the Athanasian Creed. This creed, though not the work of St Athanasius, is admittedly not of later date than the first half of the fifth century, since it contains no echoes whatsoever either of the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) or of the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). It solemnly proclaims: "Now the Catholic Faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity." Then follows a detailed exposition of the precise meaning and theological implications of this fundamental formula, embodying the majestic declaration: "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God." The symbol ends in the uncompromising spirit of the great Athanasius whose name it bears: "This is the Catholic Faith, which, except a man believe faithfully and steadfastly, he cannot be saved."

CHAPTER II

THE TRINITY IN SCRIPTURE

I. *Foreshadowings of the Trinity in the Old Testament*

It was the peculiar glory of the Jews, as God's own chosen people, to have preserved upon the earth, amidst the welter of surrounding polytheism, the worship of the one true God. As a nation, the Jews never wavered in their belief that there was but one God, Jehovah; and consequently the idea of a trinity of divine persons would be alien to their natural mental outlook.

The mystery of the Blessed Trinity was not formally revealed in the Old Testament, but in accordance with what St Bonaventure calls "the general law of preparation," this distinctively Christian doctrine is foreshadowed on many pages of the Old Testament. For it appears to be God's way not to allow the fulness of revealed truth to break upon the world suddenly. There is a long period of adaptation, as it were, during which the way is prepared gradually for the final revelation. Thus, the Fathers

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declare the Paschal Lamb to be the type, the symbol, the figure of the Divine Victim by whose blood we have been redeemed. They see in the initiation rite of circumcision an adumbration of the sacrament of baptism, and in the manna a foreshadowing of the true bread of life in the Holy Eucharist. In the same way there are assuredly indications in the Old Testament of the stupendous revelation which was to come in the New Testament as to the inner fecundity of the Divine Life in itself.

Thus St Augustine detects the implication of a plurality of divine persons in such utterances on the part of God as "Let us make man to our image and likeness,"¹ "Behold Adam is become as one of us,"² "Let us go down, and there confound their tongue"³; wherein other commentators see only the plural of majesty. The triple *sanctus* of Isaias, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts,"⁴ and the triple blessing recorded in Numbers,⁵ have also been pointed out as heralding the sublime mystery of the Trinity in Unity.

Again, the theophanies, or manifestations of God in the Old Testament, in which an angel of the Lord appeared to one or other of the patriarchs, were interpreted by all the Fathers

¹ Gen. i, 26.

² Gen. iii, 22.

³ Gen. xi, 7.

⁴ vi, 3.

⁵ vi, 24-26.

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prior to St Augustine as manifestations of the second person of the Trinity in the form of an angel. St Augustine takes exception to this view on the ground that God is incorporeal and therefore invisible to the human eye, but nevertheless he holds that the angel represents God. The most notable of these apparitions is that which was vouchsafed to Abraham in the valley of Mambre: "and when he had lifted up his eyes, there appeared to him three men standing near him: and as soon as he saw them he ran to meet them from the door of his tent, and adored down to the ground."¹ St Augustine, St Ambrose, St Hilary, and the Fathers generally, interpret this incident as a veiled manifestation of the mystery of the Trinity; and this patristic exegesis receives corroboration from the Roman Breviary which, in the response to the second reading from the Scripture occurring for Quinquagesima Sunday, setting forth the above-cited passage of Genesis, says of Abraham: "he saw three and adored one."

From the time of Daniel onwards there are clearer references to the second and third persons of the Trinity in the not infrequent personifications of the Word, Wisdom, or the Spirit. Thus we read, "By the word of the Lord the heavens were established; and all the power of

¹ Gen. xviii, 2.

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them by the spirit of his mouth.”¹ And again, “I have not spoken in secret from the beginning: from the time before it was done, I was there, and now the Lord God hath sent me, and his spirit.”² In the sapiential books, Wisdom is constantly hypostatized and speaks as a Divine Person; as, for instance, in Ecclesiasticus: “I came out of the mouth of the most high, the firstborn before all creatures.”³

Naturally the second person of the Trinity has a peculiar prominence in the Old Testament owing to the number of prophetic passages which predicate divine attributes of the coming Messiah. Thus, “The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee”⁴; “and I will make him my firstborn, high above the kings of the earth . . . and his throne as the days of heaven.”⁵ In fact many of these passages in the Old Testament are explicitly applied to Christ in the New Testament.⁶

However, the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is certainly not revealed in the Old Testament, which at best, in accordance with the general plan of the divine economy, merely foreshadows “the revelation of the mystery which was kept

¹ Psalm xxxii, 6.

² Isaias xlviii, 16.

³ xxiv, 5.

⁴ Psalm ii, 7.

⁵ Psalm lxxxviii, 28-30.

⁶ Compare, for instance, Ps. ii, 7, with Heb. i, 5; Isaias vii, 14, with Matt. i, 23; Isaias xl, 3-11, with Mark i, 3; Zacharias xii, 10, with John xix, 37.

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secret from eternity, which now is made manifest by the Scriptures, according to the precept of the eternal God, for the obedience of faith, known among all nations.”¹

2. *The Doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament*

Whereas at best the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is only dimly foreshadowed in the Old Testament, in the New Testament it shines forth with unmistakable clearness, lighting up many difficult passages with regard to the Incarnation, the redemptive work of Christ, the mission of the Holy Spirit, the operations of grace, and the infinite perfection of God.

Lest we lose ourselves in the maze of material at our disposal, it will be well, perhaps, if we set forth, first of all, the chief texts which treat of all three persons of the Trinity taken together, and then consider briefly the more important texts concerning the different persons of the Trinity taken separately.

a. The Divine Persons Considered Collectively

(i) In the Gospels

We shall consider, first of all, passages from

¹ Rom. xvi, 25, 26.

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the Gospels, and then from the Epistles. In the gospels all three divine persons are mentioned in an emphatic way on four momentous occasions.

(1) *At the Annunciation*

At the Annunciation the angel Gabriel declared unto Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."¹ Here, clearly, we have an unmistakable distinction of subsisting individuals, or independent rational substances. That the "Most High" refers to God the Father is obvious from a comparison with verse 32, where we read of the Son, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High." Now the Father is necessarily distinct from his own Son, and from the Holy Ghost, who is carrying out the work of the Most High. So, too, the Son and the Holy Ghost are really distinct from each other, since, as will be shown, the latter proceeds from the former. As to their distinct individuality there can be no doubt.

Furthermore, each of the three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, subsists

¹ Luke i, 35.

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in a rational nature, namely, the divine nature itself. That this divine nature is common to all three persons is seen from a cursory consideration of the text. The divinity of the Father, "the Most High," is beyond question: as to the second person of the Trinity, the term "Son of God" is here used in its strictly literal sense to express true, real, sonship in such a way that the Son is of the same divine nature as the Father: the divinity of the Holy Ghost is revealed both in the miraculous work which he performs, and in the fact that he is described as "the power of the Most High," in the same manner that Christ is said to be "the Son of the Most High."

In this text, then, we have set before us both the reality of the distinction between the three subsisting individuals, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and also their real community in the divine nature. In other words, we see that there are three divine persons.

(2) *At the Baptism of Christ*

Again, we have a striking manifestation of the Trinity of divine persons at the baptism of Christ in the Jordan by John the Baptist, as recorded in St Matthew's Gospel, where it is written: "And Jesus being baptized, forthwith

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came out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened to him: and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him. And behold a voice from heaven, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”¹ We have here an external manifestation of the three persons as distinct. The Father speaks from the heavens, the Son rises up out of the water, and the Holy Spirit appears in the form of a dove. Here at least, it would seem, that all possibility of “confounding the persons” is precluded.

In this solemn incident at the beginning of our Blessed Saviour’s public ministry, we have more than a mere hint or inkling as to the community of the divine nature in all three persons. We cannot reasonably doubt that the “Spirit of God” is consubstantial with the Father, “the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.” As to the divinity of the Son who, it has been objected, in this incident occupies a subordinate rôle, especially in that he has been baptized by John, it has been pointed out by many Scripture commentators that the full force of the words spoken from heaven is somewhat weakened in our English translations, which ignore the significance of the definite article before the word Son, in the Greek original. What the voice pro-

¹ iii, 16, 17.

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claimed was: "This is *the* Son *par excellence*, mine, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased"; in other words, we have here a proclamation of the divinity of the Son, of his consubstantiality with the Father.

(3) *After the Last Supper*

When our Blessed Saviour was taking leave of his disciples after the Last Supper, he said to them: "I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive. . . ." ¹ In this passage the real distinction of persons is evident. No person asks himself for anything, nor does a person ever send himself on a mission. The language used by Christ on this august occasion is at once unintelligible and unjustifiable unless the three divine persons are entirely distinct. Our Blessed Saviour asks for *another* Paraclete. The word paraclete means literally "one who is called in beside" to assist in some way. It has been variously translated as counsellor, consoler, comforter, advocate, guide, friend; but the word is so rich in meaning that it would need a sentence at least to plumb its depths. Christ himself gives us the key to its expansive meaning when he speaks

¹ John xiv, 16.

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of *another* Paraclete. He himself had been a Paraclete to the disciples. He is about to leave them. He asks the Father to send someone to take his place, to discharge his divine office, to be another Paraclete. If the divinity of Christ is once admitted, it is impossible to deny the divinity of the Spirit of Truth who was to be another Paraclete.

(4) *In the Divine Commission*

Both the distinction of persons and the unity of the divine nature are emphasized in the well-known passage of St Matthew's Gospel in which Christ's final commission to his Apostles is recorded: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."¹

The three distinct names, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in accordance with common usage, indicate three distinct persons, that is, three subsisting beings of a rational nature each complete in its own individuality in such a way as to preclude the possibility of any identification or confusion of one with another. The distinction of persons is stressed in the Greek by the presence of the definite article before each name, *the* Father, *the* Son, *the* Holy Ghost; it would

¹ Matt. xxviii, 19.

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be contrary to Greek usage thus to repeat the definite article before mere attributes of one and the same subject.

The divinity of each of the three persons is equally clear. For he in whose name baptism unto the remission of sins is administered must needs be God, and this baptism is to be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The Vulgate reading *in nomine*, which we translate "in the name of," indicates the one by whose power or authority the sacrament is administered; whilst a literal rendering of the Greek words would be "unto the name of," indicating rather, as Franzelin has pointed out, the one to whose honour and worship the recipient of the sacrament is consecrated. In either case divinity is clearly implied, divinity undivided, and possessed equally by all three persons. This interpretation is confirmed by a comparison of the text before us with 1 Cor. i, 13, where St Paul indignantly asks the Corinthians, "were you baptized in the name of Paul?" Here both the Latin and the Greek expressions for "in the name of" are the same as in St Matthew's text, and St Paul's meaning is abundantly clear, namely, "Is Paul the author of your baptism?" It is as though he said to them, "Why extol me, or Peter, or

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Apollo, or any mere mortal as the source of grace?" In other words, "Is Paul *God*?"

(ii) *In the Epistles*

As in the Gospels, so in the Epistles, there are four classical passages having reference to the persons of the Trinity considered collectively.

(1) *The Heavenly Witnesses Text*

The most famous of these is the Johannine Comma¹: "And there are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. And these three are one." That this passage sets forth the true Catholic doctrine, and that it is in perfect harmony with the teaching of St John's Gospel, there can be no doubt.

Nevertheless this statement as to the "Heavenly Witnesses" has been the subject of considerable controversy. The text itself comprises two verses of the First Epistle of St John.² The undisputed text reads: "For there are three who give testimony." Then follow the disputed words: "in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And

¹ 1 John v. 7.

² 1 John, v, 7-8.

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there are three that give testimony on earth." And then, again, we have the undisputed text: "the Spirit and the water and the blood: and these three are one." It will be observed that the undisputed words make sense in themselves if the disputed be omitted. Westcott and Hort, in their important edition of the New Testament text, state in the note on this passage that "there is no evidence for the inserted words in Greek, or in any language but Latin, before the fourteenth century"; and also that "the words first occur at earliest in the latter part of the fifth century," that is, in Latin. This summary may be said to express the general view of the evidence, though there are not wanting scholars who trace the passage into earlier times, even to Tertullian at the end of the second century A.D. In any case it is evident that the textual case against the "Comma" is a strong one; no Greek manuscript of any consequence, for example, contains it.

Something of a sensation was therefore caused when a decree of the Holy Office appeared under date of January 13th, 1897, replying in the negative to the question "whether it can safely be denied, or at least be called in question," that the disputed text is "authentic." An official explanation, however, was then given privately, and has lately been published officially

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in the *Enchiridion Biblicum* issued under the authority of the Biblical Commission¹ to the effect that this was not intended "to prevent Catholic writers from investigating the matter more fully, and after weighing the arguments on both sides . . . from inclining to the view unfavourable to the genuineness of the passage, provided they profess themselves ready to stand by the judgement of the Church. . . ." Thus we may conclude that the evidence is strong against the passage, but that the Holy See reserves to itself the ultimate decision in a matter which obviously falls within its competence.

The Council of Trent, it should be added, declared the traditional Vulgate "authentic"² in a context which shows the meaning of "authentic" to be primarily official. We are of course dealing throughout with the Latin ecclesiastical word "authentic" (*authenticus*), which must not be understood in exactly the same sense as its English derivative. In the sense of Trent the "Comma" is still unquestionably "authentic," forming part as it does of the official Clementine edition of the Vulgate.

(2) *The Teaching of St Paul*

St Paul's own teaching with regard to the

¹ Rome, 1927: pp. 46-47.

² Sess. 4.

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Blessed Trinity is unequivocal, notwithstanding the rationalist contention that he makes of Christ only a celestial man, a being removed by many degrees from divinity. Writing to the ✓Corinthians, St Paul says: "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, saith Anathema to Jesus. And no man can say the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord, and there are diversities of operations, but the same God, who worketh all in all."¹ In the first sentence we have a clear statement of the equality of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Ghost, and then follows what has been described as at least an insinuation of the doctrine of the Trinity in Godhead, since diversities of graces are ascribed to the same Spirit (the Holy Ghost); diversities of ministries to the same Lord (Christ Jesus); and diversities of operations to the same God who worketh all in all (the Father). All these operations are divine, but by appropriation they are attributed to the different persons of the Trinity according to that peculiar fittingness which led the writers of Holy Writ, in treating of divine operations, to assign external works of power to the Father, external acts of love to

¹ Cor. xii, 3-6.

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the Son, and external works of sanctification to the Holy Spirit. In this particular text, it will be noticed, the three persons are mentioned in reverse order, and this, according to some commentators, with a view to emphasizing their absolute equality.

(3) *The Trinitarian Invocation*

No one can fail to see the implications of St Paul's direct invocation of the three persons of the Trinity in the final verse of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen."

(4) *The Apostolic Salutation*

In precisely the same manner does St Peter pen the first words of his First Epistle: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers dispersed . . . according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, unto the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. . . ."

In the Epistles, then, as in the Gospels, the Holy and Undivided Trinity is shown forth both in the bewildering multiplicity of opera-

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tions outside the divine essence and in the ineffable intercommunion of the divine persons in that inner life which is from eternity unto eternity.

b. The Divine Persons Considered Separately

We are now in a position to consider the divine persons separately, that is, in their individual and distinctive relationships towards each other and towards the divine essence. The fact of the distinct relationships and of the common nature of the three persons is abundantly clear from the manner in which each of the three is spoken of in Holy Writ. It would be tedious and superfluous to give an exhaustive list of all the texts in the New Testament which treat of the nature and personality of one or other of the three divine persons. We shall therefore content ourselves with making mention only of the more celebrated texts with regard to each of the persons.

(i) God the Father

Whereas ancient heresies assailed the nature and personality of the second and third persons of the Blessed Trinity, Modernists have in addition attempted to make of God the Father a

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kind of limited deity, still in process of evolution, even blindly striving and groping to find himself in the universe as in the medium of his self-expression. Needless to say, such a view finds no warrant in Holy Scripture. In the Old Testament, Jehovah is portrayed as the omnipotent sole creator who rules and governs the world according to his will; whilst in the New Testament, he is the first person of the Trinity, the principle from which all else proceeds, even the Son and the Holy Spirit from all eternity. Thus, he is set before us not merely as the Father of all creatures in the metaphorical sense, but as the Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, in the strictly literal sense: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"¹; "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for ever"²; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings."³ That the Father is also the principle of origin for the procession of the Holy Spirit is clearly stated by St John: "When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, who proceedeth from the Father, he will give testimony of me."⁴ How precisely the second and

¹ 2 Cor. i, 3.

² Eph. i, 3.

² 2 Cor. xi, 31.

⁴ John xv, 26.

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third persons proceed from the Father we shall consider presently.

(ii) *God the Son*

The teaching of revelation with regard to the second person of the Blessed Trinity centres in the doctrine of his real and perfect sonship. If he is the real Son of God, then he must be consubstantial with the Father, that is, of the same divine nature as the Father, or, as the Creed has it, "true God of true God." There will be community, in fact identity, of nature. On the other hand, if the sonship is real, so too must be the distinction of personality. Now, that the sonship is real is stated in the New Testament, in the most unequivocal manner: "God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son"¹; "the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."² This real sonship of Christ is even contrasted by St John with metaphorical sonship, for Christ is "only begotten," whereas "as many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God."³

St Paul, too, stresses the fact that the filiation of Christ is of a different and higher order than that of the adoptive sonship even of the angels.

¹ John iii, 16.

² John viii, 18.

³ John i, 12.

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He says that God "in these days hath spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world," and who is "the figure of his substance." St Paul then goes on to say that this Son, being made higher than the angels, hath inherited a more excellent name than they, "for to which of the angels hath he said at any time, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith: And let all the angels of God adore him."¹

The Scriptural language used of Christ is unintelligible unless he is the Son of God in the most literal sense of sonship. It is clear, then, that the second person of the Trinity proceeds from the Father by generation; by some real process of generation which is from all eternity.

(iii) *God the Holy Ghost*

That the Holy Spirit is not a mere attribute of God, or some form of impersonal divine energy emanating from the Father and the Son, is obvious from the fact that, as we have already seen, baptism is administered in

¹ Heb. i, 1-6.

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the name of, that is, by the power of, the Holy Ghost, just as much as by the power of the Father and the Son. We have seen that the Holy Spirit is a distinct rational substance, in other words, a distinct person. He is a divine person, since the spiritual regeneration which he bestows in baptism is assuredly a divine gift. Moreover, the special functions attributed to the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures proclaim his Godhead: "The Holy Ghost said to them, Separate me Saul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have taken them"¹; "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them"²; "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops, to rule the Church of God."³ The Holy Spirit, then, is a divine person "who proceedeth from the Father" and from the Son who sends him.⁴

Now just as the name Son indicates a necessary likeness in nature to the Father, so, too, the term "Spirit of God" implies a necessary likeness to the essence of God. This point is stressed by St Paul in the classical text in which he argues from an analogy with the human cognitive process. He says: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of

¹ Acts xiii, 2.

³ Acts xx, 28.

² John xx, 22.

⁴ John xv, 26.

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a man that is in him? So the things also that are of God no man knoweth, but the spirit of God.”¹ St Paul has just been speaking of certain hidden mysteries, and in answer to the unspoken query as to how he knows these things, he answers that he knows them by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. He then proceeds to explain that just as no one can know a man’s secret thoughts except his own spirit or self, so no one can fathom the deep things of God but the Spirit of God, that is, the Holy Ghost, co-essential with God, and possessing the same identical nature.

Now though the Holy Spirit proceeds similar, in fact identical, in nature with the Father, as does the Son, nevertheless the Holy Spirit must proceed by a process different from that by which the Son proceeds. The second person of the Blessed Trinity is called the *Only*-begotten. Clearly, then, the Holy Spirit proceeds by a process other than that of generation.)

We are now in a position to enquire into the character of the divine processions, and into the fundamental constituents of the distinctive personality of the Father who proceeds from none, of the Son who proceeds from the Father, and of the Holy Spirit who proceeds from both.

¹ 1 Cor. ii, 11.

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But we will do well to approach this sublime study in the spirit of the true humility of learning as voiced by the Psalmist: "Lord, my heart is not exalted, nor are my eyes lofty."¹

¹ Ps. cxxx, 1.

CHAPTER III

THE FECUNDITY OF THE DIVINE LIFE

1. *The Divine Nature*

ARISTOTLE reached the highest point of pagan theological speculation when he defined God as "Thought of Thought." In Aristotle's philosophy there is an ever-ascending scale of being ranging from pure passivity to pure activity. God must necessarily be the supreme activity in which there is no alloy of passivity of any kind whatsoever. Now the highest activity of which we are aware is intellectual activity, the spiritual activity of thought. God, then, in the Aristotelian theodicy, is pure, unadulterated thought which, on account of its very perfection, can think only of the infinitely perfect, namely, itself. To think of anything lower than itself, according to Aristotle, would be derogatory to the infinite perfection of the pure activity of thought. Hence God is defined as the "Thought of Thought," the Infinite Intelligence wrapt in eternal self-contemplation. But the God of this

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philosophy is at best but a pale abstraction subsisting in awe-inspiring isolation.

On the contrary, when we come to consider the God of the Jews, there is warmth, there is light and shade, there is colour, for this is a personal God who governs the universe by his providence. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the God too of the mortal enemies of the Jews, the Philistines. He is the omnipotent God of heaven and earth who "made the little and the great, and hath equally care of all."¹ Above all, the God who is revealed in the Old Testament is a *living* God, a God endowed with the fulness of life, a God whose very essence it is to live, a God who describes himself in the stupendous words, "I am who am."² "He who is," is his distinctive title, for he is the unique being who exists necessarily, whose very existence is his essential characteristic; but not the remote impersonal colourless existence of the God of Greek philosophy. Far from it: he is personally nigh to each one of us. "Let all fear the God of Daniel," says Holy Writ, "for he is the living God."³ He is the source, the fount, the teeming principle of all life, sustaining and governing the whole of creation at every moment, the God to

¹ Wisdom vi, 8.

² Exod. iii, 14.

³ Dan. vi, 26.

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whom we must render an account of the life that he has given to us.

Islam's conception of God is well known, and represents a kind of *via media* between the Greek and the Jewish notions: "There is no God but God; and Mohammed is his prophet." So, too, Christ Jesus was his prophet, and indeed many another, since the *Qur'an* proclaims, "there is no nation but has had its warner." Nevertheless, the greatest of the prophets and apostles, such as Moses, Christ, and Mohammed, are mere mortals, and the same gates of spiritual advancement that were open to them are open to all mankind. They are "warners," admonishers, voices calling men always to the contemplation of the sublime unity of the Godhead. In no sense are these prophets intermediaries between God and his creatures: there are no intermediaries. However proficient in sanctity these "warners" may be, at best they are but guides. They do not even reflect the light of divinity, for just as the sun in the heavens is the sole source of light to this planet, so God in his isolation is the sole source of light to the spiritual world. . . . This is indeed a beautiful and arresting piece of imagery, but it must be confessed that the concept of deity which it sets forth is so dazzling that we are intellectually blinded by it. It is like looking at the sun with

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the naked eye: we are so dazed by its brilliance that we learn nothing about it.

The plain fact is that Mohammedanism, equally with paganism, though in a different way, failed to realize the true nature of God, failed to understand that he is the God of life, and love, of that life which is supremely active, and of that love which is infinitely diffusive. He is not a god who dwells like a lone star apart, but the God whose pulsative life and illimitable love find expression in the gracious condescension of his self-revelation. It is to one's intimate friends that one reveals the secrets of one's inner life, and consequently it is in the New Testament, with the coming of the Eternal Son of God in the flesh for the love of man, that the veil is drawn aside from the majesty and mystery of the divine life, so that we may catch some glimpse of it as it is in itself, and not merely as it was known hitherto in its outward and visible manifestations.

From revelation it is obvious that the divine life in itself is not solitary either in the Aristotelian or the Mohammedan sense. As we have seen, we are given many inklings of this basic truth in the Old Testament, especially in those passages wherein Wisdom is personified and speaks in accents which are unmistakably divine, as, for instance, in the following: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made

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anything from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived. . . .”¹

2. *The Divine Processions*

But it is from the New Testament that we learn definitely of the origins or processions, as they are called, which are intrinsic to the divine nature, and which give rise to the distinction of persons in God. Thus our Blessed Saviour says of himself, “For from God I proceeded and came.”² According to the Fathers, the words “and came” refer to the outward manifestation of the eternal Son of God in the flesh at his coming in the Incarnation; whilst the expression “from God I proceeded” is taken to be a statement of his eternal origin from the Father. This interpretation is confirmed by St Paul’s direct application to Christ of the words of the Psalmist, “Thou art my son, to-day have I begotten thee.” The use of “to-day,” indicating the immediate present, in conjunction with the past tense “begotten,” must be regarded as a forcible way of expressing the eternal “now,” the generation which always was, is, and ever shall be.

Furthermore, there is clear indication of an-

¹ Prov. viii, 24.

² John viii, 42.

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other origin or procession, equally from all eternity, and terminating, as does the first procession, within the divine essence itself. It is Christ himself who tells us of the Paraclete "whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father."¹ The Holy Spirit is sent by the Son, and therefore proceeds from the Son equally as from the Father.

There are, then, two distinct processions or origins in the divine essence which, as we see, is represented in Scripture as being manifestly fruitful in itself. The key to the nature of the divine fertility is to be sought in the fundamental concept of God as the supreme spirit who alone exists of himself, and is infinite in all perfections. "God is a spirit,"² and therefore his intrinsic activities must be entirely spiritual, and the divine processions or origins must be of a purely spiritual character.

For material things are sterile. Matter has no intrinsic power of self-motion, or of self-reproduction, or of self-reparation. It is, as we say, inert. Its fundamental property is that of extension; it has part outside part, and is capable of measurement, and hence Sir Oliver Lodge insists that the subject-matter of physical science is always metrical phenomena. An immaterial thing, on the other hand, cannot be measured since it

¹ John xv, 26.

² John iv, 24.

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does not possess extension. God is the supreme spirit, and man is made in God's image in so far as the soul of man is immaterial in its essence.

It is true that in its present state the soul operates through the body, and is therefore dependent on matter, on material organs, in its activities. In the eye the soul functions as sight, in the arms as movement, in the brain as thought; but it does not follow that because the soul is at present dependent on the organism in its activities, that its activities must cease with the organism. A little careful psychological introspection is sufficient to convince any careful observer that the human soul, though dependent on the body in its present activities, is nevertheless in its essence independent of matter.

We have seen that the fundamental property of matter is extension and that consequently every material agent is extended in space. For that reason it is impossible that any material agent can completely double back upon itself. Thus a knife cannot cut itself, a brush cannot brush itself; part of the knife may be applied to another part of the knife, or part of the brush to another part of the brush, but the whole knife cannot be applied to the whole knife, or the whole brush to the whole brush. And yet the human soul can completely double back upon itself. For I can think of myself; and I can then proceed

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to think of myself thinking of myself, recognizing meanwhile the absolute identity of the "I" that is thought of with the "I" that thinks. The soul performs, as it were, an intellectual somersault, completely doubling back upon itself, thereby showing its essential independence of matter and material conditions. In philosophical language it is a spiritual entity.

This marvellous power of reflection is the characteristic mark of the spiritual agent and its essential activities. These activities, the activities of a purely spiritual kind, must pertain to one or other of the purely spiritual faculties, namely, the intellect by which the soul understands the true, or the will by which the soul is attracted to the good. Thought and volition are the twin activities of the spiritual agent as such.

Now God is the supreme spirit, and therefore we must predicate of him thought and volition in their fullest perfection. This much was recognized by Aristotle, though without the guiding light of revelation he was unable to penetrate deeper into the mystery of the hidden things of God.

Since it has been made known to us by revelation that there are, intrinsic to the divine nature itself, two different processions or origins, it is clear that one of these processions will be according to the activity of the divine intelligence,

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and the other according to the activity of the divine will. This is implied in the names which the Scripture applies to the second and third persons of the Trinity. The second person is called the Logos, that is, the word or the concept, something begotten by an intellectual process; whereas the third person is called the Holy Spirit. Here the term "spirit," derived from the Latin *spirare*, to breathe, is used by analogy with the manner in which we draw a deep breath or sigh as expressive of the attraction of the will to some loved object. As we shall see, the Son proceeds according to the operation of the divine intellect, and the Holy Spirit according to the operation of the divine will.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROCESSION OF THE SON FROM THE FATHER

1. *The Doctrine of the Logos*

IN the prologue to the Fourth Gospel St John says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The term "the Word," "the Logos," was in common use amongst the philosophers of St John's day. As far back as 500 B.C. it was employed by Heraclitus to express that which gives rationality or order to the universe. With Plato, the Logos became an intermediary between God and the material world; with Aristotle, the energy in touch with finite things. The Stoics seem to have endowed the Logos with intelligence and consciousness, whilst the Jew, Philo, who was a contemporary of St John, even personifies it in much the same way that the Hebrews personified Wisdom in the Old Testament.¹

It would seem, then, that St John, of set purpose, made use of a word which was well known in the schools of his day. Ephesus was the hub of

¹ Wisdom xviii, 15; lx, 1, 2.

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the learned world, and there scholars were wont to meet together to exchange ideas, to speculate and philosophize. We can hardly doubt that a favourite theme of their discussions must have been the precise nature of the mysterious intermediary between God and man which every system of philosophy seemed to regard as a first postulate. St John says to them in effect: You argue mightily amongst yourselves, Platonists, Stoics, and disciples of the Jew Philo, as to the true character of the Logos. Behold the veil is drawn aside, and you are permitted to look into a region where pure reason cannot penetrate. It is revealed unto you that the Logos is indeed the eternal Son of God made man.

St John proclaims an entirely new *doctrine* of the Logos. For, in the first place, the Logos of current speculation was at best a vague abstraction; even the Logos of Philo "floats indistinctly midway between personal and impersonal entity."¹ But for the author of the Fourth Gospel, the Logos was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, in the person of Christ Jesus. In the second place, the idea of the Logos becoming incarnate was utterly beyond the conception of any contemporary thinker, since they all regarded matter as essentially impure and bound up with evil. That

Zeller: *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, Vol. III, p. 378, 3rd edn.

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the Supreme Being should really assume a human nature and become man, man made of a woman, as St Paul has it, was beyond their most exalted vision. And finally, neither Greek, nor Roman, nor Jew regarded the Logos as of the same identical nature with the omnipotent God whose supreme will the Logos merely executed; whereas for St John, the Logos is consubstantial with the Father (x, 30), so that by the Logos all things were made, and without him was made nothing that was made (i, 3).

2. The First Procession

The very name Logos, the word or concept, gives us an insight into the way in which the second person of the Blessed Trinity proceeds from the Father, namely, by generation. For there is a remarkable analogy between the way in which the mental word or idea of some external object is conceived in our minds and the ordinary biological process of generation. For instance, I look at some object outside myself, say an oak tree. Thereupon there is formed in my imagination a visual image or phantasm of that oak tree. The active intellect now proceeds to strip that image of its pictorial or sensory elements until there is left only the nude impression of the oak tree, and this purified image then penetrates of its

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own accord into the womb of the passive understanding, where it is assimilated and brought forth as the concept or logos of the oak tree.

In this rough and ready account of the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of intellection, it will be noticed that the external object, the oak tree, plays the part of the father; the purified image, the part of the fruitful seed; and the passive understanding, the part of the matrix or womb. Moreover, the concept resembles both its parents, for the concept of the oak tree is indeed like the oak tree, but each individual concept of the oak tree is modified somewhat, and moulded, by the particular understanding in which it is formed.

According to St Thomas Aquinas, the Eternal Father contemplating the divine essence generates therein the concept, or the Logos, of the divine essence, which is not merely like to the divine essence, but absolutely identical with it in nature. The concept which is begotten in the human mind, for instance, the concept of the oak tree, is something accidental to the mind which begets it; but whatever proceeds within the divine essence itself must be identical with the divine essence which is necessarily one and indivisible. The Logos then, which is begotten of the Father, proceeds consubstantial with the Father, that is, having precisely the same divine nature as the Father, and yet really distinct from the

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Father in personality, as every son is distinct from the father who begets him. We shall consider later the philosophical explanation adopted by the Schoolmen of this real distinction of persons in the divine nature. (For the present it suffices for us to know that the Logos proceeds from the divine essence identical with it in substance, but distinct from it by the relationship of filiation which is personal to the Logos.)

3. *The Divine Sonship*

When we speak of the generation of a concept in the human mind, obviously we are using the term generation in an analogous sense. The formation of an idea of an extramental object is not, literally and strictly speaking, generation at all. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the process may very well be likened to the process of generation. But the procession of the Logos within the divine essence *is* generation in the strict sense. This is clear alike from revelation and from reasoning based on revelation.

(i) *The Testimony of Revelation*

It is clear from revelation since, twice in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel, the Logos is called the "only begotten" of the Father. Thus, in

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verse 14, we read: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we saw his glory, the glory, as it were, of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." St John is here testifying that he himself had witnessed Christ's divine attributes shining through his sacred humanity. For St John had seen "the glory, as it were [ὥς], of the only-begotten of the Father." The Greek particle ὥς does not mean "as if," but "such as belongs to." As St Chrysostom has pointed out, it does not express similitude, but identity, as is true of our own use of the particle "like" in such expressions as "he acted like a man." St Chrysostom therefore renders the passage: "We have seen his glory, such glory as it was *becoming and right* that the only-begotten and true Son of God should have."

Again, in verse 18, St John says: "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Instead of "the only-begotten Son," the reading "God only-begotten" is found in many ancient manuscripts, so that this second reading is regarded as equally probable by His Eminence Cardinal MacRory.¹ It is an explicit statement of Christ's divine sonship, and even if this reading be not adopted, it can hardly be ignored as a valuable commentary on the text.

¹ *The Gospel of St John*, p. 33.

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In any case St John's meaning is clear. His point is that he could not have acquired the doctrine which he has set forth in the Prologue from any source other than the divine source itself. But Christ could declare it because he was "in the bosom of the Father," that is, in the secret counsel of the Father. St Thomas Aquinas, commenting on this passage, writes: "In that bosom, therefore, that is, in the most hidden recess of the paternal nature and essence which transcends all created power, is the only-begotten Son, who is therefore consubstantial with the Father."

Père Lagrange shows that the term "only-begotten," as used in the Prologue, is a much stronger expression than that used by St Paul in Romans viii, 9, where Christ is called "the first-born amongst many brethren." The Prologue states that the Logos, as God, is the only-begotten of the Father, whilst St Paul states that the Logos, as man, is the natural Son of God, and first-born among all others, who are only his adopted sons. Everything considered, it is impossible to doubt that the term "only-begotten Son" implies real, as opposed to every form of metaphorical, sonship.

The expression "Son of God" has various meanings in sacred Scripture, but there are certain passages of the New Testament in which the term obviously refers to the real eternal genera-

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tion of the second person of the Trinity. Before indicating these passages it will be helpful to glance at the usage of the term in the Old Testament and by Christ's contemporaries.

In the Old Testament it is used (1) to indicate any kind of special relationship to God. Thus it is predicated of angels,¹ and even of magistrates.² However, this vague use of the term is comparatively rare. (2) It is commonly applied (*a*) to the people of Israel, as for instance in such texts as "Be ye children of the Lord your God,"³ and "Israel is my son, my first-born"⁴; and (*b*) it is commonly applied especially to the king of Israel: thus we have, "I will be to him [David, the king] a father, and he shall be to me a son,"⁵ and "Thou art my son, this day [that is, the day of the coronation or anointing] have I begotten thee."⁶ (3) By an easy transition it came to be applied in a special manner to the Messias, the anointed one *par excellence*. This obviously would be the sense in which the term would be used of Christ by his contemporaries apart from divine revelation.

With regard to the New Testament usage, it is pretty generally admitted, even by rationalist critics, that in the Epistles the term "Son of God" applied to Christ is meant to express his divinity;

¹ Gen. vi, 2; Job i, 6.

² Ps. lxxxi, 6.

³ Deut. xiv, 1.

⁴ Exod. iv, 22.

⁵ 2 Kings vii, 14.

⁶ Ps. ii, 7.

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that it is in fact a statement of his real generation from the Father. Again, there can be no doubt as to its precise meaning when the expression is used by Our Lord himself. He teaches men to call God "our Father," but he himself always speaks of "my Father."

The twofold nature of Christ and his divine origin are well brought out in Matthew xxii, 41-46¹: "And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus asked them saying: What think you of Christ? whose son is he? They say to him: David's. He saith to them: How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying: *The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool*? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" The problem is, how can David be the Father of one whom he sees at the right hand of God? The answer is that David, though he is the father of Christ according to the flesh, cannot be his only father. He who sits at the right hand of God the Father, sharing divine authority, must indeed be the consubstantial Son of God.²

(ii) *The Testimony of Reason*

Furthermore, reasoning based on the data fur-

¹ Mark xii, 35-37.

² See also Matt. xvi, 16; Mark i, 11; Luke i, 35.

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nished by revelation shows us that the process by which the second person of the Blessed Trinity proceeds from the Father actually satisfies the strict definition of generation. Generation in the wide sense, says St Thomas Aquinas, is nothing but change from non-existence to existence. Thus, for instance, we speak of generating hope, or love, or fear in the human soul. It is to be noticed that whatever is produced in this fashion is produced, not out of nothing as in creation, but out of previously existing material. But generation in the strict sense belongs properly to living things, and is defined by St Thomas as *origo alicuius viventis a principio vivente coniuncto*¹; that is, "the origin of a living being from a conjoined living principle.")

St Thomas, however, immediately adds, "not everything which proceeds from a conjoined living principle is called begotten; for, strictly speaking, only what proceeds in the specific likeness of the parent is really generated." He then proceeds to elaborate this important point: "Nor will any likeness suffice; for a worm which is generated from animals has not the formality of generation and sonship, although it has a generic similitude; for this kind of generation requires that there should be a procession by way of similitude in the same specific nature; as a man pro-

¹ S. Th. I, q. XXVII, ad. 2, c.

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ceeds from a man, and a horse from a horse.”¹

There seem, then, to be three requisite conditions for real generation.

1. It must be a vital operation resulting in the communication of life.

2. The generating principle must be actually conjoined with that which is begotten, so that part of the substance of the parent is transformed and becomes in fact the offspring.

3. The offspring must be of the same species as the parent precisely in consequence of the process of generation. Hence, though Eve was formed from the living substance of Adam, in the same species as Adam, she was not Adam's daughter, because her specific identity with Adam was not due as a matter of course to the process of her coming into being, but to the extraordinary process of God's moulding her to the pattern of human nature.

Now St Thomas contends that the procession of the Logos in the divine essence satisfies these three conditions.

1. In the first place the Logos proceeds “by way of intelligible action, which is a vital operation.”² We have seen that the Logos proceeds precisely according to the operation of the intellect; that the eternal Father contemplating the divine essence generates the Logos. Now with us the

¹ S. Th. I, q. XXVII, ad. 2, c.

² *Ibid.*

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Logos, or the concept which is formed in the mind, is certainly not a living thing. It is an accident, a modification or quality which does not essentially belong to the mind, nor even form one of the constituent and invariable attributes of the mind.

But the Logos which is begotten in the divine essence is not something accidental to the divine essence, since the immutable divine essence is incapable of modification or qualification of any kind. (Whatever proceeds within the divine essence must be identical with that divine essence, and consequently the Logos does not proceed as an accident, but as something absolute, something substantial, as the divine essence itself in fact, under a special relationship by reason of its eternal origination. The Logos, then, is not merely living, but the inexhaustible source of all life.)

2. In the second place, whilst it is obvious that the Logos or concept which we mortals form is not of our own substance, is not, so to speak, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, but merely a sort of mental accessory, it is clear nevertheless from what has been said that the Logos which proceeds from the Father *is* of his very substance, *is* of the same divine essence in every respect, excepting only his proper relationship of filiation as opposed to that of paternity.

3. Finally, it follows that the Logos proceeds

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not merely with the same specific nature, but with the same identical nature as the Father, and this precisely because of his mode of origin, namely, according to the operation of the divine intellect. We have seen that every concept bears the likeness of the intellect that conceives it. The concept in the human mind, it is true, bears but an intentional resemblance to the object with which it corresponds; that is to say, the resemblance is entirely in the intentional order, in that sphere of thought wherein the human mind assimilates to itself the things to which it has intended or stretched forth. In this case the resemblance is not even specific.

But it is far otherwise with the divine Logos. Because the Logos is not an accidental modification of the divine essence, but absolute and substantial, he must needs proceed in the same identical nature as that possessed by the Father. Because of the simplicity of the divine essence, because it is undivided and indivisible, the Logos which is begotten in it must be identical with it. Now the process of intellection requires that the concept shall be in some way similar to the object which plays the part of father. But that which proceeds in the divine intelligence, or essence, namely, the Logos, is similar to the principle from which it proceeds, not merely in an intentional way, nor even specifically as in natural genera-

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tion, but in the most perfect possible way, namely, by substantial identity.

Hence in the procession of the Son from the Father we have real generation stripped of all its imperfections; for we have the origin of a living being from a conjoined living principle, in such a way that this living being proceeds with the selfsame nature as its progenitor. But this origination is eternal, without change, without causation, without dependence, without time, without succession, without multiplication of the divine nature, from everlasting unto everlasting.

CHAPTER V

THE PROCESSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FROM THE FATHER AND THE SON

1. *The Second Procession*

IT is evident from the New Testament that besides the procession of the Logos there is another procession within the divine essence, namely, the procession of the Holy Spirit. For the incarnate Logos says: "But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me."¹ Here we are told that he proceedeth from the Father, that he is sent from the Father by the Son; (in other words, that the Holy Spirit proceeds both from the Father and the Son.)

That he proceeds equally from the Son as from the Father is clear from a number of texts from which we may select the following words of Our Lord uttered at the Last Supper: "He [the Holy Spirit] shall glorify me; because he shall receive of mine, and shall show it to you.

¹ John xv, 26.

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All things whatsoever the Father hath, are mine.”¹ Since the Holy Spirit is a divine person, he is infinite in perfection, and therefore cannot receive anything except in his eternal origin. To receive from the Son, then, is to proceed eternally from the Son. But our Blessed Saviour adds immediately, “all things whatsoever the Father hath, are mine,” to show that the things that were essentially his were communicated to him with his essential existence in his eternal generation from the Father. In this passage Christ tells his disciples that in the future the Holy Spirit, who is to come, will reveal divine knowledge, which has been communicated to him in his procession from both the Father and the Son. For this divine knowledge, like all divine attributes, is possessed equally by all three divine persons, since, as the Athanasian Creed has it, “the whole three persons are co-eternal to one another, and co-equal.”

2. Not by Generation

(We have seen that the Son proceeds from the Father by a strict process of generation because the Logos proceeds from the divine essence according to the operation of the divine intellect. Is it conceivable that the second procession in the divine essence is also according to the opera-

¹ John xvi, 14, 15.

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tion of the divine intellect? A little reflection makes it obvious that it is not conceivable. For if the Holy Spirit also proceeded as the divine concept, as the Logos, there would be no distinction between the second and third persons of the Trinity. The second procession would be identical with the first. There cannot be two distinct processions according to the divine intellect, since the divine intellect is one and indivisible.

Now there are only two conceivable activities of a purely spiritual being, namely, the activities of the spiritual faculties of intellect and will. If, then, the Holy Spirit does not proceed according to the operation of the divine intellect, he must proceed according to the operation of the divine will. Such is the reasoning of St Thomas Aquinas, following St Augustine. Furthermore, both theologians stress what they each conceive to be the differences between the intellectual and volitional processes.

In an intellectual act the operation ends in the mind itself by the formation of a concept, which corresponds with the object of thought as its mental image, and, hence, in the Scripture, the second person of the Trinity is not only called "the Son of God," but also "the Image of God."¹

¹ 2 Cor. iv, 4; Col. i, 15.

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But the action of the will is very different. In the first place, it presupposes an act of the intellect, because, as the Schoolmen used to say, *nihil volitum nisi prius cognitum*, "nothing can be desired till it is first known." When an object is apprehended as good, as desirable, the will is drawn to it, so that the volitional process, unlike the intellectual, seems to end, not in the soul itself, but in something extrinsic to it, namely, in the desired object. For love tends to union with something outside the self.

Nevertheless in the volitional process there is a very pronounced modification within the human soul, especially in cases of intense love. It is true that we are drawn, as it were, out of ourselves to the loved one; but in such a way that we feel within us the attraction, the urge, the driving force, of the loved one. This feeling is oftentimes externated by a deep breathing or sigh which is expressed in Latin by the word *spiritus*, whose primary meaning in both classical and Scriptural usage is a breathing or blowing.

3. *But by Spiration*

(And hence, just as in the intellectual process there is begotten within us a concept which is the image of the object understood; so, too, in an act of love, there arises within us an inclina-

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tion towards the loved one which may be rightly regarded as the spiritual force of the loved one motivating within us.) Naturally poets have a good deal to say about this attraction, or inclination, or urge; they honour it with many fine names indicative of its nature from "the breath of life" to "the sigh suppressed, corroding in the cavern of the heart."¹

Now the procession of the Holy Spirit is considered to be a procession of love, that is to say, the third person of the Blessed Trinity proceeds from the Father and the Son according to the operation of the divine will. To know the supreme good in such a way as to comprehend it, is necessarily to love the supreme good. Consequently the Father from all eternity contemplating the Son, and the Son from all eternity contemplating the Father, necessitate an eternal act of mutual love, a divine spiration, common to both the Father and the Son. This spiration issues within the divine essence itself in what we can describe only as the divine breath personified, the Holy Spirit of God, subsisting in the divine essence, but as distinct from both the Father and the Son by reason of his distinctive eternal origin.

(Just as in the intellective act, the Logos or concept which we form is an accident, where-

¹ Byron.

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as the divine Logos is the subsisting divine essence itself; so, too, in the volitional act, though the spiritus or breath with us be merely an accident, in God it is the divine essence itself, with the special relation which is proper to that which proceeds according to the immanent act of divine love. But, whilst the Logos is consubstantial with the Father precisely because of the manner of his eternal origin, namely, by generation; the Holy Spirit is consubstantial with the Father and the Son, not by reason of the process of his origin, but because whatever proceeds in the divine essence itself must be in substance identical with that undivided and indivisible essence.)

We have seen, then, that the second person of the Trinity is properly called the Son, since he proceeds from the Father by a process of real generation. But the third person proceeds by a totally different process, and moreover by a process which, from the psychological standpoint, is little understood even in the analogical form in which we experience it. It is so elusive that it seems to defy introspective analysis, and consequently we have no proper name for that attraction or urge, or impulse, which is, as it were, the internal issue of the volitional process. That being so, it is not surprising that we have no proper name for the third person of the

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Trinity, as we have for the second; but in view of the fact that the Holy Ghost proceeds according to the operation of the divine will as distinguished from the divine intelligence, he is called in Scripture by such names as "Aspiration," "Gift," or "Pledge" of love. These names clearly express the characteristic outpouring of love, which manifests itself in gifts and pledges, but above all in the supreme gift or pledge to the loved one of the lover's whole self.

We may sum up what we have said with regard to the eternal origin of the third person of the Trinity in the words of the Athanasian Creed: "The Holy Ghost is from the Father and the Son, not made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding."

CHAPTER VI

THE DIVINE RELATIONS

1. *Relations Real and Mental*

THE study of the divine relations is a matter of supreme importance, for the Council of Florence, in the *Decretum pro Jacobitis*, after declaring that in the three persons there is one substance, one essence, one nature, one divinity, one immensity, and one eternity, formulates the general principle, that everything is one, except where relative opposition intervenes.¹ It follows therefore that the distinction between the persons is due to their relations to each other.

The whole doctrine of relation has been worked out elaborately by Scholastic theologians and used by them to elucidate, as far as may be, the sublime mystery of the Trinity. But here, it must be admitted frankly that we are largely in the region of philosophical speculation. The Church has made no formal pro-

¹ *Omniaque sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio.*
Denzinger, 703.

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nouncement in this matter, but it is instructive for us to see how her devoted theologians have attempted to harmonize the content of revelation with the findings of reason.

By relation we mean the habitude of one thing to another, or, as Annandale's Dictionary has it, "the condition of being such or such in respect to something else." For, says St Thomas, "the true idea of relation is not taken from its respect to that in which it is, but from its respect to something external."¹ Thus, as I sit at my desk, I have a definite positional relation to the paper on which I am writing; a totally different kind of relation to the words in which I express my thoughts; and a third kind of relation to the dog who lies at my feet. Meantime there are also my varying relations to my spiritual subjects, my fellow-citizens, and my readers.

Now it is obvious that some relations are purely mental since they have no foundation except in the mind which links up the related objects. It is in this way that the lily is related to purity, and the red light to danger. Nevertheless there are real relations whereby certain objects are linked up, not merely mentally, but in point of actual fact in the order of extra-mental reality. Thus the perfection of a wall

¹ S. Th. I, q. XXVIII, ad. 2, c.

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consists in the real positional relation of each brick to every other one; the perfection of a squad at drill lies precisely in the relative attitudes of the members of the squad.

Three conditions are seen to be required for real relationship: (*a*) the related objects must be real, and not merely figments of the mind; (*b*) they must be really distinct from each other; and (*c*) the relation of one to the other must be founded on a solid fact outside the mind which apprehends the relationship. Hence the relations of paternity and filiation existing between any human father and his son are real, because the father and son are real persons, really distinct from each other, and the relationship is founded on the physical act of generation.)

2. *Four Real Relations*

Now we have seen that in God from all eternity there are two real processions or origins, since both the Son and the Holy Spirit proceed as real persons. Each real origin gives rise to two real relations. Thus the first procession gives rise to paternity and filiation, and the second procession to spiration and procession. These relations satisfy the requirements of a real relation, for (*a*) the Father, the Son, and the Holy

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Ghost are real; (*b*) each of the four relations is distinct from each other; and (*c*) the first pair of relations are founded on the eternal act of divine intellection, whilst the second pair are founded on the eternal act of divine volition, both real vital processes.

3. *But Three Persons*

But, whilst there are four real relations, there are not four divine persons. We have already defined a person as an individual substance of a rational nature, and we have seen that the requisite conditions for personality are substantiality, individuality, and rationality.¹ Now, all four divine relations are substantial, since they subsist by reason of the divine essence; all four again are rational, since the divine essence is the divine intelligence; but all four are not individual. We have shown that for personality the rational substance must be individual in such a way that it is not in any sense part of, or common to, anything else.

Clearly in the Blessed Trinity the relation of paternity is peculiar and proper to the Father; the relation of filiation is peculiar and proper to the Son; and the relation of procession from the Father and the Son is peculiar and proper

¹ See p. 4.

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to the Holy Ghost. Each of these three relations is individual in the strictest possible sense. But not so the relation of active spiration. This relation is not individual, but common to both the Father and the Son, and consequently it cannot possibly constitute a distinct person. Hence, since there are three, and only three, distinct subsisting relations in the divine essence, there are three, and only three, divine persons.

In the Preface to holy Mass appointed for Trinity Sunday and the Sundays throughout the year, the Church solemnly prays *ut . . . in personis proprietas . . . adoretur*; "that in the persons that which is proper or individual should be adored." That which is proper or individual to each of the divine persons is his distinct relation to the others. It follows, therefore, that the distinct subsisting relations in the Trinity are to be adored. But adoration can be given only to the divine persons themselves, whence we arrive at the definition of a divine person as a distinct subsisting relation.

This is confirmed by analysing the generic definition of person and applying it to the Trinity. The distinctive characteristics of personality are rationality, substantiality, and individuality. What precisely is it in the Trinity which satisfies these requirements? It is clearly not the divine essence itself as such, for it is

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common to all three persons, as witness the Church in her Trinity Preface when she prays aloud, *et in essentia unitas . . . adoretur*; "that in the essence unity may be adored." Neither is it simply a subsisting relation, that is, a divine relation subsisting of itself, for, as we have seen, there are four such relations, one of which, active spiration, being common to both the Father and the Son, is lacking in the essential note of individuality. Only those relations which are mutually opposed to each other by reason of their origin are completely individual, or, as the Scholastic theologians have it, incommunicable. Thus paternity is by its very connotation opposed to filiation, and filiation to paternity; and since the Holy Ghost proceeds by a common spiration from both the Father and the Son, this relation of procession by an act of the mutual love of the Father and Son is necessarily opposed equally to paternity and filiation. We see then that, in the Trinity, that which is at once rational, substantial, and individual, is an incommunicable subsisting relation; incommunicable, because by reason of its very origin it is diametrically opposed to other individual subsisting relations.

Apart from revelation we could hardly conceive such a sublime notion as that of a subsisting relation; but reason alone is able to dem-

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onstrate that the concept does not involve any self-evident intrinsic repugnance. We have seen that the essential note of relation is its respect, regard, or habitude to something else. If the relation is a real one, it derives its reality from the substance in which it inheres; thus, paternity is a real relation in a real man who has begotten a real child. The notion of reality, then, is quite distinct from that of relation. However, a real relation in the Trinity cannot be something inhering in the divine essence, something modifying or qualifying the divine essence, for in that case the divine essence would be subject to change and to composition. A real divine relation must subsist of itself, must be in fact the divine essence itself in its eternal intrinsic origins. Reason can find no repugnance in that a real relation derives its reality, not from inherence in a subject, as it does with us, but in a higher way, from the divine subsistence in its immanent fecundity.

With regard to the mysteries of faith, it is the function of reason to show that these truths which are above reason are not against reason. Herein lies the "reasonable service" of speculative theology. To penetrate into the hidden recesses of the wisdom of God is beyond man's capacity and reach, for, as the Book of Wisdom has it, "hardly do we guess aright at things that

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are upon the earth: and with labour do we find the things that are before us. But the things that are in heaven, who shall search out?"¹ And of all the things in heaven none is higher, more remote from, and inaccessible to, human reason than this august mystery of the Trinity, before which, as the great Athanasius assures us, the very Seraphim veil their faces and fall prostrate in adoration.²

4. *Appropriation*

Etymologically, the word appropriation means "to make something one's own," and from that it came to mean "to make something personal which before was common," and hence, in the theological treatise on the Trinity, it signifies "the ascription of the common names, attributes, and operations to particular divine persons."

(i) *The Usage of Scripture*

We have already seen that in the Trinity everything is common to the three divine persons with the exception of the properties which are radicated in the relative opposition between the persons. Thus, filiation is proper to the second person, and cannot be predicated

¹ Wisdom ix, 16.

² Ep. ad Serap., n. 17.

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of either the Father or the Holy Ghost. But there are many attributes which, because they refer to the unity of the divine substance, can be predicated indiscriminately of all three persons. For instance, we may say equally of the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit, that he is God, that he is eternal, omnipotent, infinitely holy, the searcher of hearts. However, it is the constant usage of Holy Writ to ascribe certain of these common attributes to particular divine persons, and it will be found on examination that neither in Scripture nor tradition is the ascription or appropriation merely arbitrary.

(It is true that appropriation is a mental operation on our part by which we attribute in a special manner to one person what really belongs to all three, and it is obvious that the appropriation does not make whatever is appropriated belong more to the person to whom it is ascribed than to the other persons. Nevertheless appropriation must have some foundation other than, and independent of, our minds.)

St Thomas points out that sometimes the appropriation is made to distinguish the divine persons from each other, and then, obviously, the attributes ascribed will reflect the peculiar relations of the persons to whom these attributes are ascribed. In this way we ascribe creation to the Father, redemption to the Son,

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and sanctification to the Holy Ghost. But, on the other hand, sometimes the basis of appropriation is to distinguish the divine persons from creatures bearing the same name, and this is done by removing the imperfections which are usually associated with the name in creatures. Hence the Scripture speaks of "the *eternal* Father," "the *wise* Son," "the *holy* Spirit."

(ii) *The Grounds of Appropriation*

As a matter of fact there are many different grounds of appropriation which may be classified under three headings, according as we consider (*a*) the divine essence or substance in itself, (*b*) the divine essence in its outward activities, or (*c*) the divine essence in relation to its external effects.

(*a*) As an example of the first kind of appropriation we have the well-known attribution of St Hilary¹: *Infinitas in Aeterno, Species in Imagine, Usus in Munere*, which we may render, "the Infinitely Eternal, the Image and Likeness, the Supreme Enjoyment." Infinity and eternity are ascribed to the Father so as to stress the fact that, though he is the principle from which all else proceeds, he him-

¹ I. 2 *de Trinitate*, n. 1.

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self proceeds from none. None is greater, none before him. The Son is called the image and the likeness because he proceeds by real generation from the Father in such a way that there is between him and the Father the likeness of absolute identity of nature. And, finally, the Holy Spirit is portrayed in a peculiar expression which I have rendered Supreme Enjoyment, since St Hilary's meaning is that the Holy Spirit is in the active unitive possession of the supremely lovable, and this because the Holy Spirit proceeds as the uncreated Love of the infinitely good.

(*b*) In the second method of appropriation, the divine essence is regarded from the standpoint of its extrinsic activities, partly with a view to distinguishing the divine persons from one another, and partly with a view to distinguishing them from creatures who bear the same names. Thus, power and its products are attributed to the Father, wisdom and its offshoots to the Son, goodness and its fruits to the Holy Spirit. This attribution is partly based on the divine origins, and partly also, as St Thomas points out,¹ on the removal of the imperfections which are found in creatures. A human father on account of his age is apt to be infirm, so works of power are ascribed to

¹ In I, D. 34, q. 2.

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God the Father; a human son on account of his youth is inexperienced, so wisdom and its manifestations are attributed to God the Son; the word *spiritus*, breath or wind, indicates something which through its impetuosity is apt to be destructive, and so by contrast goodness in all its beneficent activities is appropriated to the Spirit of God.

(c) The third kind of appropriation is from the standpoint of the divine essence in relation to its external effects. The classical instance of it occurs in St Paul's Epistle to the Romans (xi, 36), where he writes, "Quoniam *ex* ipso, et *per* ipsum, et *in* ipso sunt omnia"; "For *of* him, and *by* him, and *in* him, are all things." Here the particle *ex*, *of*, indicates the efficient cause, and is therefore appropriate to the Father who is the principle from which all else proceeds; the particle *per*, *through* or *by*, indicates the plan, or the idea, or the concept, according to which the agent works, and this kind of causation is naturally ascribed to the Son; the particle *in*, which the Authorized Version translates as *to*, denotes the ultimate or final end, to or towards which all creation moves; the Supreme Good which governs all things and brings all things to its own extrinsic glory. For, as we have seen, it is peculiarly

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fitting that works of goodness should be appropriated to the Holy Spirit.

It will be understood readily that, as Père Billot has remarked,¹ all the different methods of appropriation are ultimately reducible to one, and to one which is radicated in the divine origins themselves. For whatever is appropriated to the Father will be found to imply in some way that he is the fount, the source, the principle which proceeds from none, but from which all else derives; whatever is appropriated to the Son will have necessarily some reference to the intellectual operation according to which he proceeds from the Father; and finally, whatever is appropriated to the Holy Spirit will be traceable to the action of the divine will according to which he proceeds from both the Father and the Son, consubstantial with them, but distinct in personality.

¹ *De Trinitate*, thesis XXXIV.

CHAPTER VII

THE TEMPORAL MISSION OF THE DIVINE PERSONS

I. *General and Specific Notion of Mission*

By the term *mission*, in its primary significance, we understand the sending of an agent, delegate, or messenger, and the inspired writers of Holy Writ do not hesitate to predicate such a mission of the second and third persons of the Blessed Trinity. Thus, Our Blessed Lord says, "He that sent me, is with me,"¹ and again, "if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."²

Now it is obvious that the external mission of the divine persons cannot involve the imperfections which are necessarily bound up with the mission of any human person. With us, the person who sends is obviously of higher authority than the person who is sent, for the latter has only a restricted power and a confined field of operation. Because of the perfect equality of the divine persons there can be no question of subordination of one person to another.

¹ John viii, 29.

² John xvi, 7.

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We have seen that all three divine persons have everything in common except what arises from the opposing relationship of origin. Obviously, then, the distinctive external missions of the divine persons must be radicated in the manner of their processions. Their temporal missions must, as it were, be continuations of their eternal origins.

These temporal missions, broadly speaking, are the manifestations of the substantial presence of God in his creatures. Thus in Holy Scripture works of divine wisdom are regarded as being the special mission of God the Son, whilst the operations of grace in the souls of men are ascribed to the coming of the Holy Spirit. Here, however, we are using the term mission loosely and not in its technical sense. All theologians are agreed that it has a technical sense, and for that technical sense it is required

1. that there shall be a going forth or a procession of the person who is sent from the person who sends:
2. that the person sent shall acquire a new relationship to other persons or things:
3. and acquire this new relationship precisely by reason of his procession from the sender.

Hence, though a son proceeds from his father he cannot be said to be sent by his father *wher-*

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ever he goes. His own free wanderings are in no wise dependent on his sonship as such. Again, a man may have dwelt in Rome many years and yet first acquire a mission when he is appointed by his Government as ambassador to the Holy See. In the case of the Trinity obviously there can be no change in the divine persons themselves, and therefore whatever new operation takes place in consequence of an external mission, must take place in the creature in whom the divine person is received in a new way. This divine operation, although common to all three persons of the Trinity, nevertheless exists in God the Father as an origin which does not proceed from any principle; in God the Son as in a principle which proceeds from the Father; and in the Holy Spirit as a principle which proceeds from both the Father and the Son. It is in this sense that the Scripture says, "the Son cannot do anything of himself"¹, and of the Holy Spirit, "He shall not speak of himself, but what things soever he shall hear, he shall speak."²

Hence the term mission can be applied properly only to the two divine persons who have eternal origins, and not to the Father who does not manifest himself in a new manner in creatures precisely by reason of his procession

¹ John v, 19.

² John xvi, 13.

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of origin, since, as we have seen, he has no origin and proceeds from none. Consequently only the Son and the Holy Spirit have external or temporal missions.

2. *Kinds and Forms of Missions*

Now these missions may be of two kinds; they may be visible or invisible according as the divine messenger manifests himself to us in a visible or invisible manner. Thus in the Incarnation of the Son of God we have a visible mission in its greatest possible perfection, whilst visible missions of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove and of parted tongues of fire are recorded in the New Testament. An invisible mission is one which takes place within the soul without any external signs whenever sanctifying grace is infused into the soul, or increased in the soul, according to the divine ordinance.

3. *Invisible Mission to Individual Souls*

We shall speak first of the invisible mission of the Trinity, since it is to this sanctifying operation that visible missions are directed either as a means or as an outward sign. The invisible mission of God the Son and of God

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the Holy Ghost is something over and above the invisible presence of God in the souls of all men by his sustaining power. It is a special presence granted only to those who participate in the gift of habitual grace. It is something proper to the souls of the just by which a divine person enters into the soul, not in some figurative or metaphorical sense, but really and truly as the giver of grace.

In the purely natural order of things man is not ordained, either in the present or in the future, to know God as he is in himself. In the purely natural order we could only rise to a knowledge of God as the creator and governor of the universe. But in the order of grace man is elevated to a supernatural plane and ordained ultimately even to the enjoyment of the beatific vision. This he can enjoy only in the consummated bliss of heaven, but already on earth by supernatural faith, hope, and charity we are on the way to the beatific vision, tending towards an end beyond the scope of our natural powers, and this because God himself operates within our souls.

Clearly by the infusion of sanctifying grace God, the author and giver of grace, becomes present in our souls in a manner quite distinct from his abiding presence throughout the whole universe as its creator and conservator. The

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coming of the divine person into the soul actually effects a living union of that divine person with the soul in such a way that the divine person takes possession of the soul. Time and again the Holy Scripture stresses the intimate nature of this marvellous union between the divine person and the human soul which is brought about by the invisible mission of the second or third person of the Trinity. Thus St Paul says: "The charity of God is poured forth into our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given us."¹ Again he turns to the newly converted Corinthians and asks the startling question: "Know you not that you are the temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"² For the presence of a divine person in the human soul necessarily results in that soul's intimate participation in the divine life, *i.e.*, as we have seen, in the knowledge and love which are proper and peculiar to the divine nature, so that the invisible missions of the Son and of the Holy Spirit are, as it were, reflections, imitations, even continuations of the communication of the divine life which characterizes the divine nature itself.

These invisible missions imply a speaking of the Divine Word into the soul and the impression upon it of the Divine Image, so as to render

¹ Rom. v, 5.

² 1 Cor. iii, 16.

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it the abode of divine love. The close and intimate union effected by the invisible missions of the divine persons is frequently set before us in the teaching of Holy Writ. Thus of the invisible mission of the Son we read: "My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you"¹; and similarly "that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts."² Of the invisible mission of the Holy Ghost St John says: "In this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit"³; and St Paul tells us: "We have received not the spirit of this world but the Spirit that is of God."⁴

The final object of the invisible missions of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is that we shall attain ultimately to the greatest possible unity with the Divine Trinity. The Son is given to the soul as the Image and the Splendour of the glory of the Father, so that the soul may come to know the Father, and the Holy Ghost is given as the Effusion and the Pledge of the infinite love which unites the Father and the Son, so that we may come to love God as he is in himself. The Holy Spirit is described as the "*digitus Dei*," the Finger of God, the Finger of his right hand rounding off, as it were, all

¹ Gal. iv, 19.

³ 1 John iv, 13.

² Eph. iii, 17.

⁴ 1 Cor. ii, 12.

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his extrinsic operations, revealing to us the very fulness of life in its divine eternal source. The indwelling of God in the soul is in a sense proper to the Holy Spirit, since he is the Spirit of sanctity and, as it were, the embodiment of the divine love, whereby we are led to love in return and become "like to him," so that we may be accounted worthy to see God as he is, face to face.

4. *Invisible Mission to the Church*

In addition to the invisible mission of the second and third persons to all those who belong to the soul of the Church, there is, too, the invisible mission to the Church itself, in so far as the Church is a corporate body endowed with all the principles of supernatural life in its manifold manifestations. To the Apostles and their successors in the teaching office Our Lord said¹: "The Paraclete the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and will bring all things to your mind whatsoever I have said to you"; and again to the first priests of that corporate body which is his Church, Christ said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive they are

¹ John xiv, 26.

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forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain they are retained.”¹

For a more detailed consideration of the mission of the Holy Ghost the reader may be referred to volume number 5 in this same series of “The Treasury of the Faith.”

5. *Visible Missions*

With regard to visible missions, the most important visible mission is the coming of the second person of the Trinity in the flesh in the mystery of the Incarnation. The second person of the Trinity became man to redeem us from our sins and to lead us to the beatific vision. The visible mission of God the Son was the preliminary to his invisible mission to our souls, as he tells us in the prayer to his Heavenly Father, in which he sets forth the object of his mission: “that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”²

In the Old Testament there were no visible missions, because, as St John points out, a visible mission is a manifestation of grace which is already conferred. For, says St John: “as yet the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not glorified.” It must be borne in mind that though the Fathers of the Old Testament were partici-

¹ John xx, 22-23.

² John xvii, 26.

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pators of grace within their souls, externally and legally they belonged to the order of servitude and not to that of adopted sonship.¹ In order that it might be manifest that it is through Christ, true God and true man, that all men shall acquire the power to become sons of God, it was fitting that no legal or formal dispensation of grace should precede his coming, but that the second person of the Trinity made man for us should himself inaugurate the external economy of grace. In the old dispensation God operated through the visible forms of angels, who were his messengers, the harbingers of his favours; in the new dispensation he manifests in outward form the actual gift of sanctification which he has already bestowed upon the soul.

Other visible missions of the Holy Spirit, to the early Christians, to the Apostles, and to Christ, are recorded in the New Testament. Of the visible mission of the Holy Spirit to our Blessed Saviour in the days when he walked the earth John the Baptist testifies: "I saw the Spirit coming down, as a dove from heaven, and he remained upon him."² This mission had indeed been prophetically foretold by Isaias in the Old Testament, when he said: "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wis-

¹ Gal. iii-iv; Heb. ix-x.

² John i, 32.

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dom and of the understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord.”¹

In the New Testament the Holy Spirit appeared under several emblems or sensible signs: at Our Lord's baptism, as we have just said, in the form of a dove, bringing the message of reconciliation, symbolizing the advent of salvation to the human race, just as the dove of old was used to indicate that the ancient world was saved from inundation; again the Holy Spirit is manifested as a gentle breathing signifying the spirit of God; and yet again under the forms of parted tongues of fire, showing forth the manifold operations of the Holy Spirit.

It may be asked why, in these visible missions, is one person sent rather than another. St Thomas replies: “Although the whole Trinity produces these visible creatures, the dove and the tongues of fire, nevertheless they are produced to demonstrate this person or that person of the Trinity in particular; for just as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are designated by different names, so it was possible to designate them by different symbols, though

¹ Isaias xi, 2-3.

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there is neither separation nor diversity between them."¹

It is to be noted that a visible mission always implies an invisible one, though not vice versa. Again, the invisible mission is always a real one, whereas the visible missions, with the sole exception of the Incarnation, are merely symbolical. Both kinds of missions, the invisible and the visible, are found in their highest perfection in the Incarnation of the eternal Son of God. Herein Christ assumed our human nature in such a way that it became his. His body was not merely a sign or symbol of the divine; it was divine. For the human nature which Christ assumed was united hypostatically with the divine nature which he already possessed, in the one person, the historical Jesus; and since he is in himself uncreated grace, in his visible mission all invisible missions find their bounteous source.

6. *Conclusion*

We have seen that the Trinity is a mystery in the strict sense of the term, that is to say, that it is a truth which unaided human reason

¹ *Summa Theol.* I, xliii, vii, ad. 3.

With St Thomas, and in the liturgy of the Church, the negation of separation and diversity refers to the divine nature, which, as we have seen, is identical in all three persons; the word distinction is used with regard to the divine persons.

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could never have discovered for itself, and which human reason cannot fathom even after the existence of the Trinity has been revealed to us. We are told distinctly in Holy Writ: "no one knoweth the Son but the Father: neither doth anyone know the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him."¹ The "no one" obviously means "no one outside the Trinity," for the Holy Ghost is no more excluded from the knowledge of the Father in this passage than the Son is excluded in the following text, in which St Paul explains how he came to a knowledge of the hidden things of God: "But to us God hath revealed them by his Spirit. For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him? So the things also that are of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God."² Clearly perfect knowledge of God as he is in himself is an essential attribute of the three divine persons and pertains to them alone.

But by the Redemption we have been made partakers of the divine nature, and raised to the dignity of adopted sons of God. Our adopted sonship is a derivative, a consequence, a corollary of the natural sonship of the second person of the Blessed Trinity. He is the first-

¹ Matt. xi, 27.

² I Cor. ii, 10-11.

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born, we are his brethren. For the natural sonship of Christ is the ideal of our relationship to the Father, an ideal to which, through the grace of Christ, it is possible for us to make some distant approach in this life. This indeed we do, in the supernatural order, by way of that consuming charity which is a reflection, an after-glow, as it were, of that divine love of the Father for the Son, and of the Son for the Father, of which the Holy Spirit is the Pledge and the Seal. "The Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God."¹

It is to us, then, as sons of God, to us who have been elevated by grace to the supernatural plane, to us who have been made co-heirs with Christ, to us, his intimate friends, that the sublime mystery of the inner life of God has been revealed. There is opened up to us a vision of the incalculable richness of the divine life in its eternal fecundity. We catch a glimpse of the true meaning of communion with God by contemplating the divine sociability by which each person of the Trinity penetrates and pervades each other with his whole essence, and possesses the essence of each other person as his own.

Here is the ideal unity unattainable outside the beatific society of the undivided Trinity,

¹ Rom. viii, 16.

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but nevertheless the essential exemplar of our fellowship in the Church of Christ and of our ultimate union with God. At the beginning of his First Epistle St John tells us that as an Apostle he is proclaiming the sublime mystery of the coming in the flesh of the second person of the Trinity precisely "that you also may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship may be with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ."¹

We are called to fellowship with God himself. Truly no other people hath its God so nigh. In thankfulness for the revelation made known to us we are moved to say with reverential awe, "This is our God, and there shall be no other accounted of in comparison of him."²

¹ 1 John i, 3.

² Baruch iii, 36.

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